

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AGRE-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAGR, ETRD, JM
SUBJECT: JAMAICA'S SUGAR PRODUCTION LAGS

REF: KINGSTON 1013

1. JAMAICA'S PROSPECTS FOR PRODUCING ORIGINAL TARGET
OF 340,000 TONS OF SUGAR FOR THE 1977-78 CROP HAVE BEEN
DIMMED BY BAD WEATHER AND STRIKES.

2. THE SUGAR INDUSTRY AUTHORITY (S.I.A.) HAD ORIGINALLY
FORECAST THAT PRODUCTION WOULD BE SOME 340,000 TONS - A
17 PERCENT INCREASE ABOVE LAST YEARS' PRODUCTION OF 291,000
TONS. HEAVY RAINS IN MOST OF JAMAICA SINCE LATE NOVEMBER
TO EARLY FEBRUARY HAVE REDUCED SUCROSE CONTENT AND ON
THAT BASIS A S.I.A. SOURCE HAS UNOFFICIALLY LOWERED THE
ESTIMATE TO 320,000 TONS.

3. BUT SINCE LAST WEEK, WORKERS AT FROME AND MONYMUSK
FATORIES, THE TWO LARGEST SUGAR PLANTS, HAVE GONE ON
STRIKE. THEY HAVE BEEN SUBSEQUENTLY JOINED BY WORKERS AT
BERNARD LODGE, TRELAUNY ESTATES AND WORTHY PARK, MAKING
ABOUT 70 PERCENT OF PRODUCTION CAPACITY IDLE. THE STRIKE
HAS BEEN CAUSED BY A WAGE DISPUTE BETWEEN THE BUSTAMANTE
INDUSTRIAL TRADE UNION (B.I.T.U.) AND THE NATIONAL WORKERS'
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UNION (N.W.U.) ON THE ONE HAND AND THE SUGAR PRODUCERS
FEDERATION (S.P.F.) ON THE OTHER. INDUSTRY SOURCES
HAVE INDICATED THAT LOSSES OF J\$400,000 DAILY ARE BEING
INCURRED BASED ON THE CURRENT PRICE OF J\$270 A TON.
THESE SOURCES HAVE POINTED OUT THAT BASED ON ORIGINAL
PRODUCTION FORECAST, THE INDUSTRY WOULD HAVE LOST J\$15
MILLION FOR THIS CROP. THIS, PLUS UNION CLAIMS WOULD

CREATE SERIOUS FINANCIAL PRESSURES ON THE INDUSTRY.
AS A RESULT, THE S.I.A. HAS APPLIED FOR AN INCREASE IN THE
PRICE OF SUGAR TO THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE.
NO DEFINITE FIGURE HAS BEEN QUOTED BUT THE EMBASSY UNDER-
STANDS THAT THE NEW PRICE SOUGHT IS AROUND J\$350 A TON.

4. THE NEXT MEETING BETWEEN THE UNIONS AND THE SUGAR PRODUCERS
FEDERATION IS SCHEDULED FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21.
THE SPF HAVE UNDERTAKEN TO MAKE AN OFFER THEN AND THERE
IS HOPE THAT THE STRIKE WILL BE SETTLED.
IRVING

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Message Attributes

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